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CAREER OFFICER EDUCATION IN THE 70'S -  
A NEW LOOK

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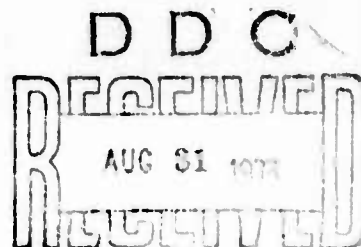
# STUDENT ESSAY

## CAREER OFFICER EDUCATION IN THE 70's A NEW LOOK

BY

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CHEMICAL CORPS

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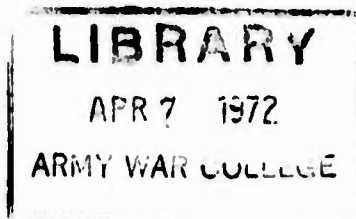


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**AUTHOR:** Robert N. Habermehl, COL, CmlC  
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The current career officer education system is examined from the branch officer basic course through the war college level. An alternative system is proposed that would require a much higher level of initiative by the individual and a much smaller investment in manpower and facilities by the Army while accomplishing the same basic objectives. Data was gathered by literature search and derived from personal experiences. The proposed system which places essentially all education after the basic officer course on a correspondence basis with brief resident sessions would greatly reduce the fifteen to twenty-five percent of the duty time that a career officer spends as a student during the first twenty years of service.

The career officer education system has steadily grown over many years. Officer education requires a significant portion of the officer corps both as instructors and students. In FY-72, over 23,000 officers were scheduled to attend one of the career courses from basic branch to war college level.<sup>1</sup> At least two thousand more officers were instructing these students or attending civilian graduate training. To examine this system further one might consider the education of a number of Colonels or Lieutenant Colonels who will graduate from the US Army War College in June 1972. These officers have now completed the top level of military education. Let us examine the educational background of one of the group to determine what education he has received since his commissioning in the Regular Army in June 1952.<sup>2</sup> He first attended a two month Basic Course at the Infantry School and then Airborne School. Following a series of troop assignments he returned to attend the advanced course for nine months and following the course completed the Ranger course. Based upon his outstanding record to this point he was selected to attend civilian graduate school for two years to obtain a Master's degree. After a utilization assignment

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<sup>1</sup>US Continental Army Command, Pamphlet No. 350-1; Fiscal Year 1972 Schedule of Classes. Officer and Enlisted Courses US Army Service Schools (15 June 1971), pp. 25, 29, 42, 52, 57, 76, 93, 108, 120, 127, 131, 133, 137, 143, 155, 159, 167, 189.

<sup>2</sup>US Department of the Army, Pamphlet No. 600-3, Career Planning for Army Commissioned Officers (4 November 1968), pp. 4-1, 5-1.

from graduate school he was selected for attendance at the US Army Command and General Staff College. Following a field assignment, he was selected to attend the Armed Forces Staff College prior to assignment to the Joint Staff. After another short tour in the field he commenced the current year at the US Army War College. He has attended all the proper courses at the proper time and seems to have an excellent chance to become a General Officer.

It seems reasonable to look back and examine this system of education determine if it is best for the individual and if it serves the Army as a whole. He has spent six of his twenty years of commissioned service as a student. He has only fourteen years of practical application as a leader or staff officer. Part of this fourteen years may well have been spent as an instructor at one of the sixteen branch service schools thus further reducing his practical training. Would he have been better prepared for high level positions with broader experience and less formal schooling? Now for a look at the Army side. As this officer has spent thirty percent of his time in a student status we might conclude that the Army has maintained a thirty percent overage in officers so that all positions could be filled while the educational program continued. This is not reasonable in that we have taken an extreme example to obtain the thirty percent figure so what would be the minimum schooling for the class of 1972? A minimum would essentially be Basic Class, Advanced Class, Command and

General Staff College and the War College or approximately three years. Thus the low end of the educational time is about fifteen percent. After this look at the lower time spent as a student, it appears that the career officer may spend about twenty percent of the first twenty years as a student. While the individual was a student in military courses the number of officers assigned as instructors should also be considered. The US Army Chemical Center and School has one officer instructor authorized per five Advanced Class students. The Armed Forces Staff College has approximately one instructor per six students. Assuming that the ratio of one instructor per seven students is reasonably representative, another three percent of the career officer corps is teaching career officer classes. In times of diminishing resources can the Army afford this educational system and is it really necessary?

To obtain some idea of the necessity for this system a brief examination of career officer education in other services, the US Civil Service educational requirements for career progression, and the educational systems of a few selected corporations will be made. It should be noted that few of these systems are as rigidly formalized and that the existing structures are often not required to be followed by the majority of the individuals in the system.

The career Naval officer professional education program has little resemblance to the Army program at the junior levels, but parallels the Army system in the advanced phases of professional

development. In the first ten years of commissioned service the Naval officer would normally attend only specialist courses and a significant percentage of regular officers would attend postgraduate education courses at the US Naval Postgraduate School or civilian institutions. The equivalent of the Army basic and advanced branch courses is obtained by on-the-job training, short specialty courses, and extension courses. After about ten years of commissioned service the Naval officer enters the intermediate development phase which again has postgraduate education opportunities, if he did not have the opportunity earlier, and offers command and staff professional education opportunities on a limited basis. A program of about 300 officers per year to the Naval Command and Staff College and the Armed Forces Staff College has been typical. At the advanced professional level the Naval War College is the counterpart of the Army War College and Naval officers are selected for education at this level. A typical selection goal is about 180 per year. Opportunities of this level appear approximately the same as for the Army officer but prior attendance at a command and staff level course is not required. As indicated above a significant percentage of career Naval officers will attend graduate level schooling. The majority will attend the US Naval Post Graduate School with a smaller number attending civilian institutions.<sup>3</sup> Discussions

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<sup>3</sup>US Department of the Army, Report of the Department of the Army Board to Review Army Officer Schools (February 1966), pp. 339-347 (hereafter referred to as "Haines Board").



between the author and numerous individual Naval officers indicate the attendance at command and staff college is quite desirable, but the important item for advancement is sea duty and command of ships at sea.

The career Air Force officer professional education program is similar in construction to the Naval system. Initial assignments of officers are generally direct to units with appropriate percentages selected for pilot, navigator, or technical training. There is no equivalent to the branch officer basic course. The first counterpart to the Army system is found at the Squadron Officer School which compares to the Army branch officer career course. The completion of this course is mandatory for all officers and for three out of four graduates this course is the terminal professional course. In FY65 about one-third of the active officers completing this course were resident students and two-thirds completed the course by correspondence. The Air Command and Staff College is a direct counterpart of the Army Command and General Staff College and the Air War College again parallels the Army War College. Selection opportunities are slightly lower than in the Army for the Command and Staff level and slightly higher for the War College level courses. The Air Force incorporates graduate degree education in similar manner to the Navy. The Air Force Institute of Technology provides a portion of the advanced training

with the large majority trained at civilian institutions.<sup>4</sup> Again as in the Navy the attendance at courses does not appear as essential as in the Army. The author has worked for two Air Force General Officers who attended none of the career courses and one who attended only the War College level without the lower levels.

The Marine Corps' professional education system is quite comparable to the Army system. The Basic School is comparable to the branch officer basic course except it is about twice the length. The Amphibious Warfare School is comparable to branch officer career courses and many Marine Corps officers attend Army branch career courses. The Marine Corps Command and Staff College is similar to the other services command and staff courses. The Marine Corps does not operate a war college level course, but Marine students attend the joint and other service war colleges. Marine Corps graduate degree education is available on a limited basis and is attended at both civilian universities and the US Naval Postgraduate School.<sup>5</sup>

Another area of professional education philosophy is that prescribed by career management of civilian personnel within the Department of the Army. Civilian Personnel Regulation 950-1

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 367-373.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 351-361.

prescribes the following:

The training philosophy embodied in career management is one which places equal emphasis on management support of formal on-and off-the-job training and development, and self-development undertaken by career employees on their own initiative and through the use of their own resources.<sup>6</sup>

This is further emphasized under a separate subparagraph as follows:

The developmental activity initiated and conducted by an individual in behalf of his own career goals is an especially important factor in the competitive process of getting ahead. Evidence of an employee's effort to prepare himself for greater responsibility - through continued academic study and other professional activities - will be used by career screening panels as a significant indication of merit.<sup>7</sup>

The above general philosophy for civilian professional education and training is further detailed by examining specific career programs. A representative program is that for Education and Training which covers some 2,300 positions in grades GS-5 through GS-15. Input is from college graduates and many of the positions are interchangeable with officer positions in the Army service school system. Minimum education and training in the job specialty area prescribed for progression to various grade levels

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<sup>6</sup>US Department of the Army, Civilian Personnel Regulation 950-1, Career Management Basic Policies and Requirements (9 November 1967), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

is three additional semester hours for a minimum of twenty-one for promotion from GS-5 to GS-7, an additional three semester hours for promotion from GS-7 to GS-9, and an additional three semester hours for promotion from GS-9 to GS-11 and GS-11 to GS-12. For advancement from GS-12 to GS-13 or GS-14 a minimum of forty class hours in management is mandatory and for advancement from GS-14 to GS-15 an additional forty class hours is required. A suggested list of specialist short courses ranging upto four weeks is also included along with two recommended extension courses. Attainment of a graduate degree on individual's own initiative is strongly encouraged and a minimal program is offered for graduate training at government expense.<sup>8</sup>

The scope of this paper does not permit an extensive examination of education and training in industry. The Haines Board<sup>9</sup> made an investigation into eight major US corporations and this summary is derived therefrom. Three general levels of management are discussed with the primary or entry level equated to company grade officers, the mid-career level equated to field grade officers, and the top-level management equated to senior colonels and general officers. Entry level management is normally trained on the job

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<sup>8</sup>US Department of the Army, Civilian Personnel Regulation 950-16, Army Civilian Career Program for Education and Training (25 June 1965), pp. 7-13.

<sup>9</sup>Haines Board, pp. 377-381.

and mid-career level on the job and in short management courses. At the top of the mid-career level, when individuals have been identified for top-level management, more extensive courses may be offered ranging up to a number of months. It was estimated that management personnel spent an average of *less* than one year away from their jobs during 30 years with the company.

Prior to discussing a proposed new system we might ask some questions of the graduate of the War College resident class of 1972. Would another year of company command or battalion staff duty been more useful than the branch advanced course? Rather than the two years of graduate school and the year at command and general staff, how about a three year tour at battalion *and* brigade staff level to provide better background to command the battalion or brigade? Has the War College really prepared him better for high level staff duty than actual experience would have prepared him for this duty? The theme of the education system that follows is that the experience would have been of at least close to the same value to the individual as the education and that the individual's service in a duty status would have been much more beneficial to *the* service than his time spent as a student. The proposed system retains the same general levels of education but requires much more effort on the part of the individual if he desires to progress.

The basic officer course would be conducted at a central location for all new officers (except medical professional). The

length of the course might vary somewhat based upon source of commission but all officers, regardless of branch would be expected to attain the same level of proficiency. Emphasis would be on leadership skills, responsibilities of an officer, communicative skills, and the general techniques of management. New officers would be carefully screened and it would be expected that some small percentage would not graduate. Marginal officers would be identified, counseled, and granted a limited or probational period of active duty not to exceed three years. This more careful evaluation at the entrance level should reduce the number of officers going to the field who lack the capability or motivation to be officers and detract from the professionalism of the officer corps.

After completion of the basic level of training, the officer would be required to complete an extension type course in branch subjects and tactics, applicable at the platoon and company level, within the next two to three years. This course would be a prerequisite to an assignment as a company commander unless the higher level commander had no qualified officer available. The extension course would be supplemented by unit training requirements conducted by senior officers of the unit to which assigned. The unit training would amplify those portions covered in extension courses and provide practical application as well as covering those specific areas pertinent to the Army officer at the time.

After satisfactory completion of the branch subjects course and after promotion to captain the officer would be required to complete a second phase of branch oriented extension course training which is directed toward qualification for battalion and brigade staff. Satisfactory completion of this phase would be a prerequisite to consideration for promotion to major. This phase of training would consist of extension courses, unit conducted training, and a short (two to four week) resident phase conducted at a single school for all branches. The resident phase would bring together groupings of career officers that would generally be maintained through the remainder of the career.

After selection to major the individual officer would be expected to enroll in a command and general staff type extension course. This course would again be supplemented by installation level classes for broadening of background and presenting subjects requiring discussion. During this course two resident sessions of about two weeks duration would be conducted. Groupings from the previous branch level training would be encouraged to remain together whenever possible and the various branch groupings would be brought together during the resident phase. Successful completion of the command and general staff phase would be a prerequisite for consideration for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and would also be a prerequisite for assignment to battalion level command except in the case where no other qualified officers were available. This

course would be the last level of mandatory officer professional education and selection of best qualified officers would be used for war college level courses. Army officers could continue attendance at the Armed Forces Staff College and at other service equivalent schools after completion of the command and general staff training, but attendance should be limited to those officers being assigned to Joint Staffs or duty with other services and would probably be considerably below the 200 per year currently programmed.<sup>10</sup>

Attendance at the Army War College level course would be by selection of the best qualified Lieutenant Colonels as currently made. The course would be conducted as the current non-resident course with the resident course eliminated. Successful completion would be a prerequisite for consideration for promotion to Colonel or selection for brigade or similar level command. The majority of the course would be conducted by correspondence with the possibility of expanding to two four-week resident sessions. Attendance at the Naval or Air War College level courses would be reserved for those few requirements when an Army officer would need this level background in the other services. Completion of the Army War College level course would be a prerequisite to attending either of the

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<sup>10</sup>US Department of the Army, The Officer Personnel Management System (25 June 1971), p. C-14-A-2, (hereafter referred to as "OPMS").



other service courses, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, or the National War College. Selection for attendance at the National War College or the Industrial College of the Armed Forces would be made from the best qualified colonels and would indicate high probability of selection to general officer.

The above discussed school system would place a high amount of emphasis on individual effort and motivation which are requirements for any officer. The brief resident sessions would allow for interchange of ideas among contemporaries and presentation of material not adaptable to correspondence. Excluding the few officers who would attend joint service schools, the average duty time spent in school would be less than six months thus providing an additional two and one-half years of effective duty performance during the first twenty years of a career. This is particularly important in that the best officers are selected for schooling at the command and general staff and war college level and this two years saved for duty performance would be of great value to the service. The management of this system would require a highly integrated schooling system and would lend towards establishment of a single school to accomplish the training. The consolidation of all schools would provide a large savings in overhead costs and the conduct of most courses by correspondence would greatly reduce the number of instructors required.

The above discussion has been directly related to the active duty officer education system and developed with this primary consideration. It is also entirely applicable to the Reserve and National Guard career officer and should be considered as a system for training officers of all components. The correspondence courses are currently available to officers not on active duty, unit schools can be conducted for meeting the requirement for officers assigned to units and a limited number of United States Army Reserve Schools could be retained for training of non-unit officers. The resident phases would be mixed with all components represented thus broadening the overall education of each of the components.

The civil advanced schooling is also a substantial part of the military officer education system. The level of civilian advanced degree training in the officer corps as a whole is not as readily categorized as is the military education portion. The Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, indicated that 36% of the Colonels on active duty in November 1970 possessed advanced degrees.<sup>11</sup> The requirements for advanced degree training are based primarily upon Army Educational Requirements Board approval of positions and the advanced degree program for Reserve Officer Training Corps instructor duty. Advanced degrees are obtained by fully funded residence programs, partially funded off-duty programs at the initiative of the individual,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. C-14-B-1.

cooperative programs between service schools and universities, and through the ROTC instructor program. In the technical services as many as 46% of the field grade officers have attained an advanced degree or have completed one or more years of graduate study.<sup>12</sup> The Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel has indicated a desired level of 20% of the career officer corps with advanced degrees.<sup>13</sup> The current emphasis on full time study for advanced degrees should be discontinued and again the *emphasis* placed upon individual initiative in conjunction with Department of the Army controlling of assignments. The major emphasis should be placed on the Reserve Officer Training Corps instructor program with junior officers assigned so that they can maintain a teaching load similar to graduate assistants at the school while pursuing appropriate degree programs. Another path of major emphasis should be in stabilizing of assignments at locations where degrees may be obtained on a part-time basis by eligible officers. The assignment to student status should be limited to six months except in rare cases where full professional training is required.

The proposed changes in the officer career education system should provide a better motivated force of equal education. It should allow for an overall reduction of ten to fifteen percent in

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<sup>12</sup>US Department of the Army, Roster of Chemical Corps Officers (1 November 1971), Part B.

<sup>13</sup>OPMS, p. C-14-2.

the size of the career officer corps by reducing the duty time spent in education and reducing the number of personnel necessary to operate the system. This system would also eliminate one or more of the ticket punching requirements which may have detracted from the overall professionalism of the officer corps.

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